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SUBJECT: INDIA AND NEPAL HOLD TALKS ON BORDER SECURITY

Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: India and Nepal held Home Secretary level talks on border security in Kathmandu September 26. The two sides agreed to set up a joint task force of security agencies for better cross border cooperation. Indian Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta stated that the Government of India

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(GOI) had expressed its concern to Nepal on cross border criminal and militant activity as well as fake currency rackets. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Joint Secretary for North (Nepal and Bhutan) Preeti Saran indicated that the talks had gone well, but that the Government of Nepal (GON) was obviously preoccupied with the recent Maoist walk out from the government. An Indian expert on Nepal suggested that border talks were an opportunity for India to involve itself in useful intervention in Nepal through better border management. END SUMMARY.

India and Nepal to Set Up Joint Border Force

¶2. (C) Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Joint Secretary for North (Nepal and Bhutan) Preeti Saran, who attended Indo-Nepal border security talks in Kathmandu September 26 with Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta, told PolCouns October 3 that, while she felt the meetings had gone well, the Government of Nepal (GON) was clearly preoccupied with the recent Maoist withdrawal from government. During the talks, India and Nepal set up a joint task force of security agencies. Gupta told the press September 26, "We have expressed our concern to Nepal on activities of criminal groups and militants and fake currency rackets during the talks." The GOI also reportedly offered assistance to Nepal to ensure peaceful Constituent Assembly elections in November. In terms of deliverables, the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), an Indian para-military force guarding the Indo-Nepal border, would have better coordination with the Nepal Armed Force and sixteen district magistrates on the Indian side of the border would share information with their Nepali counterparts.

¶3. (C) Though previously scheduled, the talks were held just after the Indian Union Home Ministry issued a security alert September 25 to the five Indian states on Nepal's border,

Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Sikkim. Defense analyst General Ashok Mehta told PolOff September 27 that border security talks were an opportunity for India to involve itself in useful intervention in Nepal through better border management, noting that criminal activities along the border - run by the so-called Indian mafia - were of paramount concern to stability in Nepal. Mehta indicated that the GOI could also be helpful by no longer permitting border movement to Maoists in order to prevent them from finding protection and sanctuary in India.

Comment

¶4. (C) Comment: Better border security is a priority for India, and will become an issue of increasing importance if Constituent Assembly elections are not held on November 22. As the GON focuses on resolving its internal divisions, it will be incumbent upon the GOI to take the lead in continuing border security cooperation. While we see this as primarily an issue for India and Nepal, Post intends to stay in close contact with the GOI on this as border instability is a key part of the GOI's calculus in formulating policies on Nepal.

End comment

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